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LETTERS

TO

A YOUNG MAN,

OCCASIONED BY

MR. WAKEFIELD'S ESSAY ON PUBLIC WORSHIP;

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A REPLY TO MR. EVANSON'S OBJECTIONS TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S DAY.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

1020. 6. 1.

Ergo cave ne te falso sub nomine mendax
Simplicitas fors transversum seducat, et illuc
Unde referre pedem nequeas trahat. ——— BUCHANANUS.

Nec tua laudabis studia, aut aliena reprendes. HORACE.

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THE PREFACE.

THE following *Letters* were written after reading the firſt edition of Mr. Wakefield's Eſſay. A ſecond edition has been publiſhed ſince, and in this, "that he may not appear," as he ſays, p. 4, "too "moroſe and unrelenting," he gives a ſketch of "a "plan of public worſhip, in which he would ac- "quieſce, till mankind ſhall be ſo well diſciplined "with knowledge and virtue, by means of more "learned, aſſiduous, and diſintereſted teachers, as "to be able to conform with greater accuracy to "the real power and ſpirit of Chriſtianity, deline- "ated in the life and doctrines of its founder; when "the goſpel ſhall ſhine in its native ſplendour, and "every miſt of ceremony and ſuperſtition diſſolve "before its rays." But this, in my opinion, will not be while human nature is what it now is, or while the world continues. I therefore aſk no longer term for the duration of public worſhip.

In this plan of Mr. Wakefield's, however, I do not diſcover any thing particularly excellent, or materially differing from the plan of public worſhip adopted by ſome whom he, with an evident ſneer, calls *Unitarian Diſſenters*; though if Mr. Wakefield be not an abſolute *unique* among Chriſtians, this is

the claſs to which he himſelf belongs, being an Unitarian, and not conforming to the eſtabliſhed church. He propoſes to conclude the ſervice with "a ſhort addreſs from the miniſter to God," though without ſaying whether the people are to join in it; and yet in other places he ſeems to prefer a liturgy with reſponſes to any other mode of worſhip. As to *long* or *ſhort*, they are only terms of compariſon, and all prayers in general uſe among us would have appeared ſhort to many of our anceſtors. If the generality of the hearers, to whoſe inclinations miniſters will generally conform, do not think the prayers, or the exhortations, too long, they are not too long with reſpect to themſelves, whatever they may be with reſpect to others. But that Mr. Wakefield ſhould indulge Chriſtians with a mode of worſhip which he at the ſame time acknowledges, p. 56, to be not only "without any authority from the goſpel "of God, but inconſiſtent with its true character," appears to me not a little extraordinary. Surely nothing to which this deſcription can properly apply ought to be tolerated by any Chriſtian, in condeſcenſion to any man, or any prejudice.

I am ſorry to ſee ſo much appearance of bigotry againſt the whole body of Diſſenters, mixed with ſo many profeſſions of uncommon liberality, as appears in this pamphlet. Alas, what have they done? What have they done to provoke the implacable reſentment of Mr. Wakefield? What have they done but, in common with other denominations of Chriſtians,

Chriſtians (if they, who have hardly any thing in common, can be called a *denomination*) adopt modes of public worſhip approved by themſelves, as moſt conducive to their own edification? And, ſurely, the circumſtance of *length* or *brevity*, that of *forms* or *no forms*, *reſponſes* or *no reſponſes*, cannot be of ſo much conſequence as to make us the object of ſuch pointed ſatire. However, if others be no more affected by it than I feel myſelf to be, the dart will fall pointleſs. We have no great reaſon to dread either the *club of the arguments*, p. iv. or the *ſhafts of the ridicule*, with which we are threatened.

Mr. Wakefield, wiſhing to appear in the character of a reformer, and to exhibit Chriſtianity in greater purity than it has hitherto been ſeen in, ſhould have recommended his ſyſtem by diſcovering more of the genuine ſpirit of it than appears in his virulent and unprovoked cenſures of Dr. Price, whoſe character every conſideration calls upon *me* to vindicate. Mr. Wakefield allows him to have been, "in the main, a very virtuous and amiable "man, and a great proficient in various parts of "learning;" which is certainly merit enough for one man, ſince no perſon excels in every thing. But he adds, that he was "exceedingly illiterate, like "the majority of the Diſſenting miniſters" (for they muſt come in for their ſhare of cenſure) "in the "branch moſt eſſential to theology; and with all "his zeal for civil freedom, no true friend of reli-"gious liberty."

This, in my opinion (and I certainly knew more of him than Mr. Wakefield can pretend to do), is a character that is far from being applicable to Dr. Price, or the generality of diſſenting miniſters. That Dr. Price had been as well acquainted with the learned languages (for that I ſuppoſe to be the branch of knowledge that Mr. Wakefield alludes to) as the generality of the clergy, even thoſe who have been educated at our Univerſities, I have no doubt (for the real ſcholars even among them are not numerous) and that he retained as much Latin and Greek as the generality of ſcholars do at his time of life, I have alſo no doubt. For with moſt men advancing in life, inferior ſtudies give place to ſuperior ones.

But I will venture to ſay, that while a perſon retains ſo much Greek or Hebrew (an acquaintance with which laſt is a rare qualification with the clergy) as to be able to read without aſſiſtance only the more eaſy parts of ſcripture, he has every requiſite of a good critic with reſpect to any thing deſerving particular attention. For this does not depend upon the facility with which he can read the languages in general. With a little more time he will collect the evidence neceſſary to aſcertain the ſenſe of any difficult paſſage, and form as good an opinion, as the more ready ſcholar. The greateſt ſcholar would hardly chooſe to publiſh an opinion concerning the ſenſe of a diſputed paſſage, without conſulting *concordances*, *lexicons*, and *indexes*, which the ordinary ſcholar

ſcholar can alſo do. And ſome of the greateſt ſcholars in the learned languages have been very poor divines *.

Beſides, to aſcertain the true ſenſe of paſſages of ſcripture the knowledge of many things, beſides the language in which they are written, is requiſite, eſpecially that of cuſtoms, opinions, &c. Even the phraſeology of ſcripture may not be ſufficiently attended to by thoſe who are proficients in the language in general. This alſo appears from Mr. Wakefield's interpretation of our Saviour's language, on which he lays ſo much ſtreſs, the true ſenſe of which he has entirely miſtaken, though there is no difficulty whatever in conſtruing every word. The real value of a facility in reading the learned languages is greatly overrated by thoſe who

* If we may judge of Mr. Wakefield's general ſyſtem of theology from the following ſketch of it, p. 5, it is not ſuch as can ſafely defy either the club of argument, or the ſhaft of ridicule. "The ſtupendous doctrine of redemption from the "conſequences of Adam's tranſgreſſion by the achievement of "immortality through the medium of the Meſſiah, a doctrine "proclaimed, exemplified, and aſcertained, by the life of "the Son of God, his ſacrifice on the croſs, and his reſtor-"ation to life on the third day, was inculcated on mankind "amidſt a moſt auguſt diſplay of celeſtial agency, accompanying "this unexampled communication of the Deity, the completion "and concluſion, it ſhould ſeem, of all his religious diſpenſa-"ſations to the human race." The union of *Unitarianiſm*, with ſuch crude conceptions as theſe, reſembles the mixture of *iron and clay* in Nebuchadnezzar's images.

boaſt of it *; and much more uſeful things muſt be ſacrificed to it.

Let us now conſider how it appears that Dr. Price was "no true friend of religious liberty." "He was forward," Mr. Wakefield ſays, "on va-"rious occaſions, to expreſs his diſapprobation of "my conduct, and oppoſed my election to the "claſſical tutorſhip in the college at Hackney." He adds, in a ſtrain of invective ſurely not becoming any extraordinary meaſure of the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, or that can peculiarly recommend any mode of it, "but that Diſſenters ſhould thus ſhew their "averſion to *any* religious principles, or *any* prac-"tice grounded on thoſe principles, is an exceſs of "inconſiſtency and impudence, which no language "in my power can chaſtiſe in terms of ſuitable in-"dignation and contempt."

A conſiderable portion of this unutterable indignation and contempt, as much at leaſt as fell to the ſhare of Dr. Price, I own belongs to me; being equally chargeable with this groſs inconſiſtency and impudence. But whereas Dr. Price is happily out

* I by no means wiſh to detract from the reputation of Mr. Wakefield for that kind of literature to which he has given particular attention, on which he evidently values himſelf, and with reſpect to which he pronounces Diſſenters in general to be *exceedingly illiterate*. A Diſſenter, however, of whoſe acquaintance with the ſame branch of literature I have conceived a high opinion, will ſoon endeavour to give the world an eſtimate of it.

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of the reach of this ſudden ſtorm, which cannot affect the dead, it may overwhelm the living. Being, however, ſo much intereſted, let us expoſtulate a little on the ſubject.

How can it be ſaid that a man is *no true friend of religious liberty*, merely becauſe he expreſſes his diſapprobation of any particular opinion or conduct, and acts in conſequence of it? It is a liberty which all men, and all Chriſtians, take; and certainly no man has ever done it with more freedom than Mr. Wakefield himſelf, and this very pamphlet affords the ſtrongeſt proof of it.

Dr. Price really thought, as I myſelf do, that public worſhip is of great importance, and that an example of habitual attendance upon it is of particular conſequence in an inſtructor of youth; and he acted upon this principle, as, I believe, all the truſtees of the New College did, in demurring to elect Mr. Wakefield a tutor in it, till they could procure information whether he attended public worſhip or not. The anſwer returned to their enquiries was not deciſive, but left room to preſume that, as he had attended the public worſhip of the church of England, when he was tutor at Warrington, he would do ſo in a ſimilar ſituation here; and with a liberality which Mr. Wakefield ſhould have acknowledged, they were not ſolicitous what mode of public worſhip he preferred, though in their opinion his former practice had been inconſiſtent with his

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own ſentiments, he being an Unitarian, while the worſhip he attended was Trinitarian.

When, to the concern of all the friends of the inſtitution, Mr. Wakefield was found to attend no public worſhip at all, ſtill, with a liberality, which certainly does them honour, and which he would not have found every where, they expreſſed no public diſapprobation of it, but ſuffered him to continue in his employment till he himſelf, of his own accord, diſſolved the connexion. Could Mr. Wakefield's Cambridge friends, of whoſe liberality he makes ſo great a boaſt, to the diſparagement of the Diſſenters, have done more * ?

Thus much I thought myſelf called upon to ſay in defence of Dr. Price, of the Diſſenters in general, and of the truſtees of the new College in particular. Dr. Price I conſider as one of the firſt of human characters. I have had occaſion to give particular attention to it, and I look up to it with equal veneration, and affection. Of all men Dr. Price was certainly the fartheſt from being actuated

* I do not much wonder that Mr. Wakefield, being a Cambridge man, ſhould boaſt of his own Univerſity, to the diſparagement of Diſſenters. I, being a Diſſenter, may be prejudiced on the other ſide; but, in my opinion, it is ſufficient praiſe for the members of the Univerſity of Cambridge, if they be allowed to occupy a middle ſtation between thoſe of the Univerſity of Oxford, and thoſe who are uſually called *rational Diſſenters*, with reſpect to liberality, and an acquaintance with uſeful knowledge in its full extent.

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by the ſpirit of perſecution; and, if true candour ever *had its perfect work* in this world, it was in his breaſt.

This I ſay, without wiſhing to detract from the virtue of the man, who, in my opinion, undervalues him. Mr. Wakefield's "diſpoſition may be as "ſerious, his love of virtue as ardent, and his faith "as ſincere," as in p. 26 he ſays it is; and certainly he is a great ſufferer for his religious opinions. "I am perſuaded," he ſays, Preface, p. 4, "that "no man in England, of any denomination, has "ſuffered ſo much hindrance in his ſecular con-"cerns, on account of his religious opinions, as "myſelf; and this is to my mind a perpetual ſource "of unſpeakable exultation."

I am happy (and this I ſay without any offenſive meaning) that Mr. Wakefield is able to conſole himſelf in this manner; for I do not ſee how, in the nature of things, there can be any remedy in the caſe till his opinions be more generally received. If he be, as I doubt not he is, truly conſcientious in doing every thing in his power to diſcountenance public worſhip, may not others be equally conſcientious in adhering to it, and even in dreading the influence which his ſentiments and practice may have on their children and acquaintance? This negative perſecution, if it can be ſo called (for in reality it is nothing more than withholding poſitive encouragement) is the neceſſary and unavoidable conſequence of Mr. Wakefield's avowed opinions and conduct, and certainly

tainly differs very much from that kind of perſecution which ariſes from perſons not being content to think and act for themſelves, but from a determination to controul the conduct of others.

I had myſelf full as much reaſon to complain of perſecution, when for ſeveral years I was not able to get a ſingle ſcholar, when I wiſhed to open a ſchool, becauſe I was an Arian. For any perſon who had a dread of Arianiſm, and of his child being infected by me, could not be expected to put him under my care; nor could I complain of it. It was the neceſſary conſequence of my principles and my ſituation.

Suppoſe, what is very poſſible, that any perſon ſhould make it a matter of religion to refrain from all labour, not only on Sundays, but on Saturday (the Jewiſh Sabbath) alſo, and likewiſe on all the faſts, feſtivals, and holidays of every kind in the Popiſh calendar, would he not neceſſarily find *hindrance in his ſecular concerns* in conſequence of acting according to the dictates of his conſcience? He certainly would; but his friends could not relieve him: they could only pity him. I ſhould think, however, that there are ſo many perſons, eſpecially in the upper ranks of life, diſinclined to public worſhip, that Mr. Wakefield would not meet with much hindrance in his ſecular concerns from them, at leaſt on this account.

All that any of us can do is to follow the beſt judgment of our own minds, and abide by the con-

ſequences of upright and conſiſtent conduct, whatever they may be. But let us not cenſure others for following their beſt judgments, though it may eventually prove inconvenient to us. Many of my enemies, who would not only diſcountenance, but even deſtroy me, if they were able, I am far from thinking very ill of; and if their zeal had no mixture of malignity, there would even be a merit in it. The time will come when we ſhall know what we are now ignorant of, and likewiſe one another, better than we do at preſent; and then it may happen that the perſecutors and perſecuted ſhall rejoice together, each of them having aſſiſted in carrying on the wonderful deſigns of providence, in promoting the ſpread of truth and virtue, though in very different ways.

I do not ſee why *the Diſſenters* ſhould be treated with ſuch peculiar acrimony by Mr. Wakefield, or other perſons; ſince they are by no means one body of men, or anſwerable for each others principles or conduct. As Proteſtants, and much more as Chriſtians, Mr. Wakefield himſelf claſſes with us; and would he not think it hard if our abſurd opinions, or improper conduct, ſhould be aſcribed to him by a Catholic, or an unbeliever?

To my reply to Mr. Wakefield's *Eſſay on Public Worſhip* I have thought proper to ſubjoin ſome *Remarks on Mr. Evanſon's Letter* to me on the obſervance of the *Lord's Day*; and I have prefixed to them that article of mine in the *Theological Repoſitory*, which

which was the occaſion of his letter. The ſubjects are ſufficiently ſimilar to give a propriety to theſe pieces accompanying each other. Mr. Evanſon is as chargeable as Mr. Wakefield with a cenſurable contempt of his opponents; though, to appearance, not on the poor ground of their being Diſſenters.

Both theſe writers have brought important diſcuſſions before the public, and they ought to purſue them to their proper termination. And certainly Mr. Evanſon ſhould not have thrown out the reflections that he has done on the authority of Matthew's goſpel, or on the value of the hiſtorical evidence of Chriſtianity, without giving the reaſons on which ſuch opinions as theſe are founded.

As the Rev. Mr. G. Morgan was better acquainted with the literature of his uncle, Dr. Price, than I can pretend to be, I requeſted his account of it, and he has given me his opinion in the following letter.

DEAR SIR,

DR. PRICE was by no means a ſtranger to the Greek and Latin languages. He was induced to give them a conſiderable degree of attention, by their immediate connexion with ſome of his favourite purſuits. Early in life his ſtudies directed him to *Cudworth's Intellectual Syſtem*.—From this work he imbibed a ſtrong partiality for Platoniſm, and an eager deſire to examine the ſyſtem according to Plato's

Plato's deſcription of it in his own language: this he accompliſhed, though, agreeably to his own confeſſion, after the labour of years, and the experience of very great difficulties. His notes, however, to his *Treatiſe on Morals* will ſhew that he was not a ſtranger to the author he admired.

Beſides, there was no part of literature more intereſting to Dr. Price than a critical knowledge of the New Teſtament.—This was an object of his purſuit to the lateſt hour of his life; indeed he read with uncommon avidity whatever related to this ſubject.

His congregation muſt remember that in his ſermons he frequently introduced verbal criticiſms attended with a reference to the original language.

I will add, that he was ſo great an admirer of *Epictetus* as always to carry a copy of his *Enchiridion* in his pocket, the Greek of which he interpreted with the utmoſt eaſe.

Theſe circumſtances moſt certainly give Dr. Price no claim to eminence as a claſſical ſcholar, but they are ſufficient to refute the idle charge of his being *illiterate*; a charge which I ſhould ſcarcely think to be deſerving of any notice, as I ſhould ſuppoſe that its effect will be altogether confined to the indulgence of the author's temper.

I am, &c.

G. Morgan.

A VINDICATION OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

LETTER I.

Of the natural Propriety of ſocial Prayer.

DEAR SIR;

I FIND that you have read *Mr. Wakefield's Eſſay on the Expediency and Propriety of public or ſocial Worſhip*, and alſo *Mr. Evanſon's Letter to me, on the Obſervance of the Lord's Day*; that theſe treatiſes have made a conſiderable impreſſion on your mind, as they have on the minds of many others, and that, in conſequence of this, you have of late abſented yourſelf from all public worſhip. This I am truly concerned for, becauſe I cannot help thinking that the opinions thoſe gentlemen maintain are ill founded, and may be attended with conſequences unfavourable to religion, and the beſt intereſts of mankind, which I am ſure you have at heart.

Had you objected to prayer univerſally, as an addreſs to a Being who is previouſly acquainted with every thing that we can inform him of, who is not defective in any good diſpoſition towards any of his creatures, and whoſe purpoſes cannot be changed by any thing that we can ſay to him, there would, on the principle of *natural religion*, excluſive of what

we learn from the ſcriptures, have been ſomething ſpecious in your ſcheme. It is an objection that has given much trouble to ingenious and pious men. But admitting the reaſonableneſs of prayer in general, there cannot, ſurely, be even any plauſible objection to ſeveral perſons joining in the ſame prayer, when they all ſtand in the ſame relation to the great object of prayer.

What would you ſay of the regulations of a private family, in which each child ſhould be permitted to ſpeak to his father alone, but any two or three of them ſhould be forbidden to approach him at the ſame time, though they had all the very ſame requeſt to make, and found a convenience in going together? You would certainly think there was ſomething extremely whimſical and unreaſonable in ſuch an order. And would it not be equally abſurd in the great family of mankind, with reſpect to God, their common parent?

The whole of our intercourſe with our Maker is founded on the analogy between our relation to him and that to our earthly parents. If, therefore, a human parent would even wiſh to ſee his children come to him together, and he would receive pleaſure from ſuch a ſight, we are ſufficiently authorized to conclude, that the ſame circumſtance is no leſs pleaſing to our Univerſal Parent; that he will be pleaſed with ſeeing his whole family, or as many of them as could be conveniently aſſembled for the purpoſe, come to addreſs him in common, declaring

claring their common wants, and expreſſing their common gratitude and ſubmiſſion.

This is an idea ſo natural, that it has been adopted by all nations, whether favoured with divine revelation or not. The very idea of each individual applying to the Supreme Being *only ſeparately*, and never, or not generally, in companies, does not appear to have been ſo much as ſtarted before. Modes of worſhip have been various, as various as the fancies of men could make them; but ſtill it has always been ſocial. Sometimes perſons have preſented themſelves in the temples, or at the altars, together, but have prayed ſeparately. At other times one of the company has ſpoken aloud, ſo as to be the mouth of all the reſt; and frequently they have all ſpoken together, repeating the ſame words. All theſe, however, are only varieties of public or ſocial worſhip.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Jewiſh Worſhip.

DEAR SIR;

In the Jewiſh religion, the Divine Being, who himſelf appointed the forms of it, not only was there proviſion for a morning and evening ſacrifice, offered in the name of the whole nation, and an annual day of atonement, in which the high prieſt went into the holy of holies to ſupplicate for all the people, but every male of a proper age was obliged to make his appearance before God three times in the courſe of every year. This was not merely *public*, but, ſtrictly ſpeaking, *national worſhip*.

In the uſual mode of worſhip among the Jews, the people prayed in the great court of the temple at the time that the prieſts were offering incenſe in the holy place, each perſon praying for himſelf. But to this David added hymns, to be ſung by the Levites, accompanied with inſtruments of muſic; and in this part of the worſhip all the people might join. What theſe hymns were, may be ſeen in the book of pſalms, many of which were compoſed for this purpoſe; and ſeveral of them conſiſt of joint addreſſes to the Supreme Being in the plural number, though the purpoſe of public worſhip is equally attained

attained by each of the company ſpeaking the ſame words in the ſingular number. It is probable, however, that hymns had been uſed on the ſame occaſion before, and that David only improved this part of public worſhip, now called *Pſalmody*. The heathens alſo had their religious hymns, accompanied with inſtruments of muſic, at their ſacrifices.

After the Babyloniſh captivity, the *ſynagogue worſhip* was introduced; and this is well known to have conſiſted of reading the ſcriptures and prayers, and probably of ſinging alſo, for ſuch is the worſhip of the Jews in their ſynagogues at this day, and their cuſtoms have not materially changed ſince the introduction of Chriſtianity, and certainly not in imitation of the cuſtoms of Chriſtians. There are Jews in this country: their ſynagogues are open to Chriſtians, and their liturgies are printed in Hebrew and in Engliſh, and in the title page of the book the prayers contained in it are ſaid not only *to be publicly read in the ſynagogues*, but alſo *to be uſed in all families* *.

It is not particularly ſaid that Jeſus went to the ſynagogues to *pray*, but neither is it ſaid that he went thither to hear the ſcriptures read; but as prayer is well known to have been the proper bu-

* The Jews have not uſually prayers in private families, but their cuſtom is to reſort to their ſynagogues early in the morning and late in the evening, to pray ſeparately. But whenever, on thoſe occaſions, ten perſons meet together, they conſider themſelves as *a congregation*, and then one of them reads the prayers aloud, and the reſt ſay *Amen*.

ſineſs of the place, there cannot be a doubt but that, when he attended there, he conſtantly did both the one and the other; his preaching or teaching in the ſynagogues being only occaſional, and therefore particularly mentioned. Had Jeſus neglected the worſhip of the ſynagogue, or any part of it, he would, no doubt, have been ſeverely cenſured, if not excommunicated, on that account. A neglect of this kind could not but have been particularly objected to him by his cavalling and watchful enemies. But no ſuch thing is ſo much as hinted at in the whole of the goſpel hiſtory. To expect the expreſs authority of Chriſt in favour of public worſhip is moſt unreaſonable, when in his time the practice was univerſal, and his own compliance with it was, no doubt, moſt ſtrict and exemplary. In fact, to require an expreſs account of his going to the temple, or to the ſynagogue to pray, when every other Jew did ſo, and would have been cenſured for not doing it, is like requiring ſimilar expreſs evidence of his undreſſing to go to bed. It is fortunate, however, that we have a diſtinct account of Jeſus eating, drinking, and ſleeping, or we might have been amuſed once more with the gnoſtic notion, of his having no groſs body, that required any ſuſtenance or refreſhment of the kind.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER III.

Objections to ſocial Prayer from the Sayings of Chriſt.

DEAR SIR,

You have been led by Mr. Wakefield to lay great ſtreſs on our Saviour's ſaying to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 21), *Believe me, the hour cometh when ye ſhall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem, worſhip the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth, for the Father ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him*; and alſo on his ſaying to his diſciples (Matt. vi. 56), *Thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut the door, pray to thy Father who is in ſecret.* But to interpret ſuch language as this, as if it was intended to forbid all public worſhip, or any worſhip beſides that of the cloſet, appears to me to betray a moſt unaccountable ignorance of the ſcripture phraſeology, and on the ſame principles it might have been concluded that all ſacrifices were forbidden to the Jews, even long before the coming of Chriſt.

David ſays, Pſ. li. 16, *Thou deſireſt not ſacrifice, elſe would I give it; thou delighteſt not in burnt offer-*

ing. The ſacrifices of God are a broken ſpirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not deſpiſe. Iſaiah alſo ſays, ch. i. 13, *Bring no more vain oblations. Incenſe is an abomination to me. The new moons and the ſabbaths, the calling of aſſemblies, I cannot away with. It is iniquity, even the ſolemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feaſts, my ſoul hateth. They are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them.* How ſimilar are theſe and many other paſſages of the Old Teſtament to the language of our Saviour quoted above; but how little ſhould we be juſtified in ſuppoſing that they meant any thing more than that internal religion, or that of the heart, is preferable to that which is only external.

In like manner, all that Jeſus ever intended by what he ſaid to the woman of Samaria was, that in the goſpel diſpenſation neither the temple on Mount Gerizim, nor that at Jeruſalem, would be the only authorized place of national worſhip; ſince the Gentile Chriſtians would have no concern with either of them; and that no worſhip of this kind was of any conſequence, compared with the religion of the heart. For it was cuſtomary with the Jews to deny of one thing what they only meant to aſſert more ſtrongly of another. Thus we read, John i. 17, *The law came by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.* The meaning of which was, not what the words literally interpreted would ſignify; viz. that there was no grace or truth in the law of Moſes,

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but that the diſpenſation of the goſpel is a ſyſtem of more important truth, and a more gracious or benevolent diſpenſation than the law.

That Jeſus did not mean that the national worſhip of the temple, or the Jewiſh diſpenſation in general, was ever to be diſcontinued, is evident from his own conduct; and that the Apoſtles did not ſo underſtand him is evident from theirs; for they conformed to the law moſt ſtrictly in every point. Paul, who contended the moſt earneſtly for the liberty of the Gentile converts, circumciſed Timothy, though his father was a Greek, becauſe his mother was a Jeweſs. And in order to refute the calumny of ſome who had ſaid, Acts xxi. 22, that *he had taught all the Jews who were among the Gentiles to forſake Moſes, ſaying, that they ought not to circumciſe their children, neither to walk after the cuſtoms*, he purified himſelf in the temple, and thereby convinced his Jewiſh brethren that he himſelf *walked orderly, and kept the law*,

It is well known that all the Jewiſh Chriſtians, to the lateſt period to which we are able to trace them, continued firmly attached to their peculiar cuſtoms. Nor have I the leaſt doubt, but that this remarkable people is to be diſtinguiſhed by circumciſion, ſacrifices at Jeruſalem, and other cuſtoms, after their return to their own country, and the rebuilding their temple, and to continue ſo to the end of time. All that Paul is ſuppoſed to have ſaid to the contrary is to be interpreted in the ſame manner as

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the preceding quotations from the prophets, and ſuch language as the following, quoted by our Saviour, *I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice*; which is explained by what immediately follows, *and the knowledge of the Lord rather than burnt offering*, Hoſ. vi. 6, the meaning of it being, not that ſacrifice was ever to be rejected, but to be conſidered as of inferior value when compared with moral duties.

That Jeſus did not intend to be underſtood literally in his directions about *praying in the cloſet only*, is evident from his own practice; for he often prayed elſewhere, and in the view and hearing of his diſciples. He could therefore only mean to expreſs, in ſtrong emphatic language, his diſapprobation of the abominable oſtentation of the Scribes and Phariſees of his time, who ſtopped to pray even in the public ſtreets, when the hour of prayer was come, when they might have retired out of the view of all men for the purpoſe.

A rigorous interpretation of this precept would alſo be inconſiſtent with another general and very important direction of his, to *let our light ſhine before men, that others ſeeing our good works may glorify our Father who is in heaven.* How is this to be done, if men are never to ſee others in the performance of that particular good work, which, according to the ſcriptures, is the beſt foundation of all the reſt, viz. devotion?

I do not lay much ſtreſs on the phraſe *our Father*

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in the Lord's Prayer; though I think it much more naturally implies a direction for joint or ſocial prayer; and that, had the idea of Jeſus been that each of his diſciples ſhould always pray ſeparately, and never together, he would rather have taught them to ſay *my Father.*

That, in the idea of Jeſus, his diſciples were, on extraordinary occaſions at leaſt, to pray jointly, is clearly implied in what he ſaid, Matt. xviii. 19. *Again I ſay unto you, that if two of you ſhall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them.* The meaning of this ſeems to be, that the prayers of his Apoſtles would have the ſame efficacy with their heavenly Father, as if he himſelf had been with them, and joined in their petitions. However, the Lord's Prayer was evidently intended for ordinary, and not for extraordinary occaſions; and accordingly it conſiſts of ſuch petitions as we can at this day, with the greateſt propriety, make uſe of. Indeed, almoſt the whole of this prayer has been obſerved to be borrowed from forms that were in uſe among the Jews.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the Practice of the Apoſtles.

DEAR SIR,

MR. WAKEFIELD appeals to the practice of the Apoſtles, as unfavourable to public worſhip. But this appears to me to be as clearly favourable to it as that of our Saviour: and if we only conſider the ſituation of things in their time, it is almoſt impoſſible not to conclude that it *muſt* have been ſo.

The Apoſtles, being Jews, were accuſtomed to the buſineſs and the forms of ſynagogue worſhip, which conſiſted of reading the ſcriptures, and prayer. When they began to preach Chriſtianity, it was in the Jewiſh ſynagogues, at the uſual times of the Jewiſh worſhip, which was morning and evening; that is, at our nine in the forenoon, and three in the afternoon, the times of ſacrificing in the temple; and to theſe Jewiſh ſynagogues the Gentiles of the place reſorted to hear the Apoſtles. When the Chriſtians ſeparated themſelves from the Jews, as we have an account of their doing at Corinth, Acts xviii. 6, and procured a place of worſhip of their own, they, no doubt, continued to do juſt as they had done before in the ſynagogue. No change would be made but

in the place of meeting. They would, of courſe, aſſemble on the ſame day, and at the ſame hours. There was no motive whatever for a change, except of the Sabbath for Sunday, which in time took place; but this change would not naturally proceed farther than the day. The buſineſs of it, and the manner of conducting the buſineſs, would be the ſame as before, and conſequently public prayer would not be omitted.

It is well known to all perſons converſant in Chriſtian antiquity, that, even the officers and diſcipline of the Chriſtian church were borrowed from thoſe of the Jewiſh ſynagogue, the elders and deacons being the ſame in both. And notwithſtanding all the differences of opinion and practice among Chriſtians, from the time of the Apoſtles to the preſent, it does not appear that there was ever any difference on *this* ſubject. All the ſects of Chriſtians had their churches, their miniſters, and their public worſhip. Abuſes were, no doubt, introduced into every thing, and into this among the reſt. But, as we are able to trace the riſe and progreſs of all other abuſes; ſurely, if public worſhip itſelf had been an abuſe, which aroſe after the times of the Apoſtles, there could not have been any peculiar difficulty in tracing it, and aſcribing it to its proper author. Such an innovation as this could not have been introduced ſilently, like a mere opinion. It muſt have made a great and viſible change in the ſtate of things, ſuch as could not but have attracted much notice.

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I cannot help concluding, therefore, that ſince no ſuch change as this in the affairs of Chriſtians can be pointed out, but that, notwithſtanding every other poſſible difference, there is no trace of any on this ſubject, the practice was always univerſal; that it began with the Apoſtles, and, though changing in form, has always remained the ſame in ſubſtance, till Mr. Wakefield undertook to diſpute the authority, expediency, and propriety of it.

We frequently read of the Apoſtles and other Chriſtians being aſſembled together, and on almoſt all theſe occaſions there were prayers. Of the diſciples in general it is ſaid, Acts ii. 41, that *they continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles' doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*, which is evidently a deſcription of their uſual worſhip, as more particularly deſcribed by Juſtin Martyr in a later period.

As the Jews had been uſed to pray for themſelves, though in the company of others, both in the temple and in the ſynagogues, it is poſſible that this might be done by many Chriſtians in early times. This is now the practice of the Catholics in their churches; which are open every day, and all day long, for this purpoſe. But that prayers in which others were expected to join were uſed in the public aſſemblies of Chriſtians, in the time of the Apoſtles, is evident from one circumſtance, if there were no other, viz. that the audience was expected to ſay *amen* to the prayer, which, therefore, muſt have been delivered

in an audible voice, ſo as to have diſturbed others, if they had at the ſame time been praying by themſelves. 1 Cor. xiv. 16, *When thou ſhalt bleſs with the ſpirit, how ſhall he who occupies the place of the unlearned ſay amen at thy giving of thanks, ſeeing he underſtandeth not what thou ſayeſt. For thou verily giveſt thanks well, but the other is not edified.* To ſay *amen* to the public prayers was alſo the cuſtom in the Jewiſh ſynagogues, and, in imitation of it, continued to be a reſponſe in all Chriſtian churches in early times,

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the Expediency and Uſe of Public Worſhip.

DEAR SIR,

MR. WAKEFIELD appeals to the practice of Chriſt and the Apoſtles, as unfavourable to public worſhip; but he refuſes to abide by this appeal. "If it were," he ſays, p. 6, "an original appendage to the "goſpel, the argument of progreſſive practical per-"fection, grounded on the exigencies of the primitive "times, the genius of the goſpel, and the character "of the human mind, would conſtitute alone in

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" my eſtimation a moſt powerful argument, when " oppoſed by nothing better than mere uſage and " preſcription."

This appears to me to be moſt uncertain and dangerous ground to go upon; ſince the mere fancy of any individual Chriſtian, of his having conceived a better and more improved method of devotion than was known to Chriſt or the Apoſtles, will, on this principle, authorize him to depart from their ideas, and follow his own. It was this principle that led to all the abuſes and corruptions of Chriſtian worſhip in the dark ages. For they were all conceived to be improvements, when they were introduced, and even not contradictory to any thing in the practice of Chriſt or the Apoſtles. What unbounded ſcope then will be given to imagination, when no regard is paid to that practice, or any other precedent; but when what was done by Chriſt himſelf, and the Apoſtles after him, may be conſidered as only ſuiting the mere *infancy* of Chriſtianity, whereas we live in the advanced ſtate of it; when rejecting their *milk*, we think ourſelves fit to take *ſtronger meat* than they ever ventured upon.

With this idea one perſon may reject the obſervance of the Lord's day, another all public or ſocial worſhip, and a third all prayer, public or private, or he may circumſcribe the objects of prayer according to his fancy. This alſo has been done by Mr. Wakefield. " Where is the paſſage of ſcripture," he ſays, p. 36, " which gives me authority to pray " for

"for *health* (to ſingle out this practice among others) "in that unqualified manner with which ſuch peti- "tions are often urged on the ear of the Al- "mighty."

In what unqualified, and therefore indecent, manner, ſome perſons may pray for health, or for any thing elſe, I cannot ſay, and therefore cannot defend. But that health, or any other temporal bleſſing, or what is uſually deemed ſuch, may be very innocently prayed for, I have no doubt, if we conduct ourſelves by ſcripture precept or example. Hezekiah prayed moſt earneſtly for recovery from ſickneſs, that is, for health and life, and was not cenſured, but graciouſly heard. David both prayed, and gave thanks, for the ſame bleſſing, and others of a ſimilar nature; and our Lord authorizes us to pray for our *daily bread*, which is the means of ſupporting health and life.

If the mere poſſibility of any thing being no bleſſing, but a curſe, to us, be a reaſon why we ſhould not pray for it, ſuch is our ignorance, that we ought to forbear to pray for any thing. What is there in nature that is abſolutely, and univerſally, either good or evil? Certainly not life itſelf, or any thing that contributes to the preſervation of it. Nay, as we ought, in ſtrictneſs, to judge of *moral* as of *natural* things, can any perſon be abſolutely certain that he ſhall not be ultimately better, as Peter probably was, for falling by any particular temptation. Might he not, therefore, on this principle, queſtion the pro-

priety of our Saviour's direction, to pray that we be not led into temptation. Surely, then, ſeeing to what it leads, we cannot be too careful how we give way to the idea of aiming at a degree of refinement, and perfection, in the method of devotion unknown to Chriſt or the Apoſtles, ſo as to think ourſelves at liberty to depart from their principles and practice.

We are certainly allowed by an univerſal and moſt indulgent Parent, who knoweth our frame (and the practice is abundantly authorized in the ſcriptures), to indulge our natural wiſhes for whatever appears to us to be good for us, at the time, and alſo to expreſs that wiſh in the form of a prayer, but always with due ſubmiſſion to the will of God, who knows better than we do what is really good for us. Chriſt even prayed to be excuſed the pains of a violent death, though he had been apprized that it was the wiſe intention of God that he ſhould ſubmit to them, and was prepared ſo to do. To pretend to greater refinement, and greater ſtrength of mind, than this, is unnatural. We only deceive and injure ourſelves by the attempt.

If an attention be paid to the real principles of human nature, which Mr. Wakefield calls *the character of the human mind*, it appears to me, that we muſt perceive the wiſdom of all the uſual means of virtue, and of ſocial prayer among the reſt, as what every man, be his attainments what they will, really needs, and may uſefully avail himſelf of. Every paſſion or affection

affection of our minds is ſtrengthened by proper exerciſe; and all the ſocial paſſions (and thoſe of devotion are all of this claſs) are beſt exerciſed in company. Will any perſon pretend that he can be ſo chearful alone, as in the company of thoſe who are as much exhilarated as himſelf? Does not every man feel the glow of patriotiſm with double fervour when others join him in expreſſing the ſame patriotic ſentiments? Is not this the principle on which all clubs, and ſocial meetings of that kind, are formed? Muſt not, then, the ſentiments of devotion be felt with pecular fervour when others join us in them, either in hymns, or in prayer? Let any man go into a Catholic church abroad, where he will ſee, as I have done, the natural expreſſions of devotion, unreſtrained by ſhame, and where there is no ſuſpicion of hypocriſy, and ſay whether he be not excited to devotion by the ſight. If he do not chooſe to go into a church, he may be ſome judge in this caſe by ſeeing even the counterfeit devotion of an actor on the ſtage, or viewing it in a good picture.

Certainly there are ſeaſons in which it is beſt for a man to be alone, and to pour out his heart before his Father, who ſeeth in ſecret; but at other times, eſpecially when the mind is leſs diſpoſed to fervour, it is equally advantageous to join in the common forms of adoration, confeſſion, thankſgiving, and petition, with others. We alſo feel the ſentiments of *brotherly love* with peculiar warmth when

we preſent ourſelves at the ſame time in the preſence of our common Father, and jointly expreſs the feelings that belong to our common, and moſt intereſting relation to him. This practice muſt, in a more eſpecial manner, tend to repreſs all reſentment, and promote compaſſion and good-will. We are all the offending children of the ſame parent, and equally ſtand in need of the ſame indulgence and mercy: let us therefore join in ſupplicating it together.

I do not ſay that our preſent forms of devotion will ſuit a man in the more advanced ſtate of being to which he will be raiſed in the ſtate after death, becauſe I know nothing of that ſtate: but they appear to be well adapted to human nature in its preſent ſtate; and we ſhall conſult our improvement infinitely better by conforming to them, than by attempting to get above them, and diſregarding them. Beſides, the bulk of mankind will never be in that high claſs of Chriſtians which does not ſtand in need of the uſual modes of improvement; and, in whatever rank our vanity may lead us to place ourſelves, we ſhould conſider how our example may affect them.

You may think that you can employ your time more uſefully in your cloſet than you can do in the church, or the meeting-houſe; and in ſome caſes no doubt you may; there being no general rule without ſome exceptions, and eſſential ſocial duties may well occaſionally ſuperſede the attendance on public worſhip.

worſhip. But, in general, I am well perſuaded that a man cannot ſpend his time to better purpoſe than by ſetting an example of a regard to the forms of religion to thoſe who look up to him; to ſay nothing of the improvement that he may himſelf receive there, if he give due attention to the duties of the place. If he be inattentive to them, he may feel his time paſs irkſomely enough; and, as far as his own improvement is concerned, it might have been better for him to have been elſewhere: but the ſame objection will lie againſt any other duty, in any other place.

The mind is improved by a repetition of good impreſſions. We all know that a ſerious turn of mind is acquired by reading ſerious books, and ſerious converſation; and that levity of mind is acquired by impreſſions of an oppoſite nature: and if every perſon be the better for hearing a good diſcourſe, on a moral ſubject, when the attention is not fatigued by the length of it, ſome real improvement may be had from a repetition of the ſame ſentiments and ideas expreſſed in the form of a prayer, provided that be not too long.

There appears to me to be unreaſonable complaints of *long prayers*, when pious *diſcourſes*, of much greater length, are not particularly complained of; and a prayer may be conſidered as a particular mode of preſenting the ſame pious ſentiments to the mind, ſo that the hearer of it may be edified, whether he join in it ſo as to make it his own prayer or

not. If this exerciſe, which requires a conſiderable effort of the mental faculties, be omitted, the mind, in a paſſive ſtate, will ſtill be ſubject to the impreſſion of uſeful ſentiments, and may derive conſiderable advantage from the ſervice.

The longeſt prayer that I have ever met with is that of biſhop Hoadley, in his treatiſe on the Lord's Supper, and which I have reprinted in my *Forms for Unitarian Worſhip.* But certainly even that long form may be *read* at one time with much ſatisfaction and advantage. Why then might it not be *heard*, without interruption, with equal advantage? From habit many perſons, we can have no doubt, have felt nothing of wearineſs or diſguſt from prayers of an hour long, when, I ſuppoſe, Mr. Wakefield would feel all the horrors of languor and diſtreſs in leſs than five minutes. Such is the effect of education; and I ſhould think it no unfavourable circumſtance in a perſon's education that ſhould enable him to bear, to reliſh, and to improve by, devotional exerciſes of conſiderable length.

It is even wiſe in a man to uſe ſome little effort with himſelf, and not to deſiſt from religious exerciſes on the firſt ſymptoms of wearineſs, but to perſevere in his attention to what he hears; and this is no more than we are obliged to do in a thouſand other caſes, and what we find our account in. An exerciſe of any kind that is tireſome at firſt may not only ceaſe to be tireſome, but even become pleaſant, ſo that we cannot well do without it; and if it

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be omitted, we ſhall feel a vacuity which nothing elſe can ſupply. This will be equally the caſe with religious exerciſes; and is it not deſirable that the mind be brought into ſuch a ſtate as not only to bear, but to reliſh, religious exerciſes of all kinds; ſince it muſt be an effectual ſecurity to virtue? We know by reading and obſervation, that ſome perſons have been able to reliſh nothing ſo much. Our Saviour could continue a whole night in prayer to God; and the Apoſtle exhorts us, no doubt from his own practice, to *pray without ceaſing*; and, allowing for ſtrong expreſſions, there muſt ſurely be ſome meaning in ſuch language as this.

If we diſcontinue religious exerciſes in public, we ſhall in time become leſs diſpoſed to them in private, and be in danger of loſing all ſenſe of *habitual devotion*, except what may remain from former good impreſſions. Habits of piety or benevolence require not only to be formed, but to be kept up, and invigorated, by repeated acts; and ſure I am that this habitual devotion, which is the higheſt attainment of man, and the moſt perfective of his rational nature, can never be acquired, or kept up, without ſuch frequent meditation on ſubjects of religion, reading the ſcriptures, and actual or virtual prayer, as will not in general be attained without the aid of public worſhip, in which the attention will be neceſſarily ſolicited at leaſt by proper objects; where the ſcriptures are always more or leſs read, where proper diſcourſes are delivered, and where the Su-

preme Being is invoked, and numbers join in the ſame forms of adoration.

In all matters of great importance it is our wiſdom not to depend wholly on voluntary acts, but to lay ourſelves under a kind of neceſſity of doing that which is only ultimately, and not immediately, and obviouſly, beneficial to us. If a young perſon had nothing of the nature of a *taſk* impoſed upon him, he would hardly be brought to learn any thing. Before he could be brought to apply from free *choice*, the proper ſeaſon of acquiring ſome branches of knowledge would be paſt, and could never be recalled. Now in many reſpects we are all but children, and in our noviciate, and we ſhall act a very unwiſe part, if we leave thoſe practices which furniſh the elements of religious feelings and habits to our own arbitrary pleaſure. In this caſe the practice will often be neglected, and conſequently the habit will never be formed.

It is happy for many perſons that the force of cuſtom operates as a kind of law, and obliges them to attend to acts of public and private devotion from their early years, and even through the whole of life. By this means they are continually kept within the influence of good impreſſions, the ſilent operation of which is unſpeakably beneficial to them. It may ſometimes ſubject them to paſs an hour in a manner rather unpleaſant to them, but by degrees they become reconciled to it, ſo that, from being irkſome, it becomes tolerable, and from toler-

able ſuch as, whether poſitively pleaſurable or not, he does not know how to do without. However, by this means he is kept out of the paths of vice, and in the practice of virtue.

I own myſelf to be ſo far from Chriſtian perfection, that I think myſelf happy in ſuch a neceſſary mode of ſpending my time, eſpecially on Sundays, as ſerves to keep up a conſtant attention to my ſituation as an accountable being, to my relation to God, and my dependance upon him, ſo that I cannot be long without being reminded of my deſtination to a future and everlaſting ſtate; as by this means I hope I am more in the way of acquiring thoſe ſentiments and habits which will qualify me for it. Let others fancy that they can do without theſe ordinary helps, I cannot but think there would be more wiſdom in a greater diſtruſt of themſelves. *Happy is he that feareth always.*

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of Oſtentation in Religion.

DEAR SIR,

You think that by refuſing to pray in public you avoid *oſtentation*, which is certainly a bad thing, and ought, no doubt, to be guarded againſt. But an apparent *indifference to religion* is another bad thing, and therefore ought likewiſe to be guarded againſt; and how is it to be known that a man is devout at all, if no perſon ever ſee, or know him to be ſo? To avoid oſtentation on this rigorous idea, not only muſt a man never pray out of his cloſet, but be careful that it be not known that he prays, even there; becauſe his retiring for that purpoſe will, *if it be known*, have the ſame effect. And ſince the ſame reaſon requires that ſimilar precautions be taken with reſpect to alms-giving, and every other moral virtue, how is the religious man to be diſtinguiſhed from the irreligious, at leaſt from the careleſs and indifferent? Is no man ever to diſcover any zeal for religion, or is his zeal to be ſhewn in words only, and never by his actions, leſt his conduct ſhould ſavour of oſtentation?

Our Lord abſolutely requires of his diſciples that they ſhould *confeſs him before men*; for that, other-

wiſe, he will not confeſs, or acknowledge them before his heavenly father and the holy angels. But how is this to be done upon the plan of refraining from all public worſhip, and even from celebrating the Lord's Supper? Is there to be no outward badge or viſible token of a man's being a Chriſtian? Is he to wait till he be interrogated on the ſubject? The primitive Chriſtians thought, and acted, very differently.

Oſtentation of religion is not the vice of the preſent age. Mankind in general are verging to the oppoſite extreme. You may even attend to the whole converſation and conduct of many perſons, who make profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and even habitually attend public worſhip, and, except in that ſingle circumſtance, you would not be able to diſcover whether they were Chriſtians or not. How much more difficult then muſt it be to diſcover the Chriſtianity of the man who does not attend Chriſtian worſhip, never joining in the devotions of his fellow Chriſtians, either in the church, or in his family. Oſtentation of religion has exiſted in this country, eſpecially among the Puritans and Diſſenters; but there are few traces of it to be found at preſent. The peculiar practices mentioned with ridicule and contempt by Mr. Wakefield (but which I own I ſhould look upon with reſpect), I never heard of before. Why then ſo much precaution againſt a vice from which there is no danger? It is like directing our whole force

to

to the defence of one ſide of a fortreſs, when the enemy is making a breach at the oppoſite ſide.

Let us conſider a little what is the ground of this ſo much dreaded oſtentation. It is a man's valuing himſelf on ſomething that is uncommon; not, on doing what is merely proper in itſelf, and ſimply his duty, but ſomething more than is expected of him. But is this the caſe with reſpect to the homage we owe to our Maker? Why ſhould it be deemed a ſubject of oſtentation to acknowledge the being and providence of God, and our obligation and ſubjection to him? Is this a thing ſo extraordinary as to afford juſt cauſe of boaſting? And if I do acknowledge the being and providence of God, and ſhould not be aſhamed to profeſs it, if I were interrogated on the ſubject, where can be the impropriety of doing it in the moſt public, as well as in the moſt private manner? If I wiſh, as I think I ought to do, that my belief, and correſponding practice, ſhould be known, for the ſake of any influence that it may have on others, am I not under obligation to do it in public, that my neighbours, and the world, may know that I do it? David thought himſelf bound in duty to do this *in the preſence of all the people*, Pſ. cxvi. 14—18. Daniel was not content with praying in ſecret, at the court of Babylon, but choſe to pray in ſuch a manner, or to ſhow that he was neither aſhamed, nor afraid to do it, Dan. vi. 10, and he is not blamed for his oſtentation on that account.

When

When you have conſidered with attention what I have advanced in theſe *Letters*, in favour of *public worſhip*, I flatter myſelf you will be convinced of the reaſonableneſs, and real value of it; and not be carried away, as young perſons are apt to be, with what has nothing to recommend it beſides its novelty, ſeeming liberality, and remoteneſs from vulgar prejudice. Be eſpecially upon your guard againſt that diſlike of reſtraint which is peculiarly incident to youth, and ſuſpect yourſelf, and ſuſpend your determinations, when the experience of mankind is againſt you. An inſtitution recommended by the conſtant obſervance of all ages, and all nations, and eſpecially all Chriſtians, and which has never been objected to before yeſterday, will probably be found to have ſerious uſes, and certainly ſhould not be abandoned till after a very deliberate examination.

I am,

My young friend,

Your ſincere well-wiſher,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Clapton,
March 24, 1792.

The Obſervance of the Lord's Day vindicated againſt the Objections of Eubulus, in the Theological Repoſitory, Vol. VI.

GENTLEMEN,

In addition to the obſervations of *Philander* and *Subſidiarius*, and in reply to the laſt communication of *Eubulus*, I beg leave to make a few remarks on what he has advanced with reſpect to the manner in which Chriſtians in general ſpend the Sunday, or the Lord's Day, making it a ceſſation from all worldly buſineſs.

This, Eubulus ſays, p. 14, "is an inſtitution "which cannot be productive of any valuable ends, "but ſuch as are eaſily attained without it. It not "only occaſions a loſs to individuals, and to the "community at large, of one ſeventh part of the "induſtry of the manufacturers and labourers of "every kind; but, what is infinitely more impor-"tant, induces a very large majority of that moſt "uſeful and numerous part of the ſpecies, to miſ-"ſpend that ſeventh of their time in diſſipation and "intemperance; which too naturally, and too cer-"tainly, leads them to vicious immoralities, and "crimes, of every degree."

In ſupport of this opinion, he ſays, p. 16, "The "apoſtles and firſt diſciples of Chriſt are no where "ſaid

"ſaid to have diſtinguiſhed the firſt day of the "week, in any manner whatſover;" and again, p. 94, "The Chriſtians of the ſecond century "did not obſerve, and conſequently had not re- "ceived, any ſuch inſtitution from the Apoſtles of "Chriſt, and their immediate diſciples."

Farther, ſpeaking of the writers of the three firſt centuries, he ſays, p. 21, 22, "inſtead of inform- "ing us that ſuch a ſabbath was kept, they expreſsly "aſſure us, that neither had the goſpel enjoined, "nor did they practiſe, any ſuch obſervance. In "the firſt and pureſt ages of chriſtianity, their meet- "ings were ſhort, and either very early in the morn- "ing, before the uſual hours of buſineſs, after which "they departed, each to their ſeveral occupations, "or elſe in the evening, after the buſineſs of the "day was ended."

As Eubulus ſeems to acknowledge that the practice of the ſecond and third centuries will enable us to aſcertain what was the practice of the Apoſtles, and agreeable to the will of Chriſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſatisfy him, that Sunday was ſpent by Chriſtians of that age, as far as circumſtances would permit, in the ſame manner as it is generally ſpent now, viz. that it was conſidered as *a ſacred day*, and that then Chriſtians paſſed as much time in places of public worſhip as they do now.

I need not quote particular paſſages to prove what muſt be allowed by all, viz. that in every place in which Chriſtians were numerous, there was a place

place for their aſſembling themſelves, diſtinct from a private houſe. This is evident from Paul's epiſtles to the Corinthians, eſpecially 1 Cor. ii. 22. Indeed it is natural to ſuppoſe that Chriſtians would imitate the Jews in this reſpect. In theſe places of general aſſembly, the epiſtles directed to whole churches were, no doubt, publicly read, as they continued to be in after times. In theſe places ſeveral ſervices were regularly performed, and proper officers were appointed, and paid for the purpoſe. We read in the New Teſtament of *elders*, *deacons*, and *deaconeſſes*. This ſo exactly reſembles the cuſtom of a later period, that it affords a conſiderable preſumption that thoſe officers were employed in the ſame manner from the beginning, viz. ſome of them in the inſtruction of Chriſtians aſſembled for that purpoſe, and eſpecially on the Lord's Day.

That there were theſe aſſemblies of Chriſtians, and that they were held on the Lord's Day, appears pretty clearly from the epiſtles of Ignatius; which, whether genuine or not, were no doubt written within the period mentioned by Eubulus.

Exhorting Chriſtians to perfect unanimity, he ſays, "As therefore the Lord did nothing without "the Father, being united to him, neither by him-"ſelf, nor yet by his Apoſtles, ſo neither do ye any "thing without your biſhop and preſbyters. Nei-"ther endeavour to let any thing appear rational to "yourſelves apart; but being come together into "the ſame place, have one common prayer, one

"common

" common ſupplication, one mind, one hope, in " charity undefiled. Wherefore come ye altoge- " ther as unto one temple of God, as to one altar, as " to one Jeſus Chriſt, who proceeded from one " Father, and exiſts in one, and is returned to " one *."

Again, ſpeaking of perfect Chriſtians, he ſays, " No longer obſerving ſabbaths, but keeping the " Lord's Day, in which alſo our life is ſprung up " in him, and through his death, &c. †"

To theſe places of general aſſembly, which were called *churches*, Chriſtians came ſometimes from conſiderable diſtances, which muſt have taken up much time, as alſo muſt the buſineſs that was done when they were aſſembled. The moſt authentic account of this is found in Juſtin Martyr, and is as follows:

" On the day that is called Sunday, there is an

* Μηδε πειρασηε ευλογον τι φαινεσθαι ιδια υμιν· αλλ' επι το αυτο μια προσευχη μια δεησις, εις νους μια ελπις, εν αγαπη, εν τη χαρα τη αμωμω. Εις εστιν Ιησους Χριστος, ου αμεινον ουδεν εστιν. Παντες ουν ως εις ενα ναον συντρεχετε Θεω, ως επι το εν θυσιαστηριον, ως επι ενα Ιησουν Χριστον, τον αφ ενος πατρος προελθοντα, και εις ενα οντα και χωρησαντα. Ign. Ad. Mag. c. vii. p. 19.

† Ει ουν οι εν παλαιοις πραγμασιν αναστραφεντες εις καινοτητα ελπιδος ηλυθον; μηκετι σαββατιζοντες αλλα κατα κυριακην [ζωην] ζωντες, εν η και ζωη ημων ανετειλεν δι αυτου, &c. Ign. Ad. Mag. c. ix. p. 20. The Greek has the word ζωην but, as it is not in the Latin tranſlation, and without it there is a better contraſt to keeping the ſabbath, mentioned immediately before, it is, I believe, univerſally conſidered as an interpolation. See the note of Cotilerius on the paſſage.

" aſſembly of all who live in the cities, or in the " country; and the acts of the Apoſtles and the " writings of the prophets are read, according as the " time will permit. The preſident diſcourſes, in- " ſtructing the people, and exhorting them to good " actions. Then we ſtand up to pray, and after " prayer, bread, and wine with water, are brought, " and the preſident offers prayers and thankſgivings " as he is able, and the people join in ſaying, amen. " Then there is a diſtribution and a partaking of " the things for which thanks were given, and they " are ſent to thoſe who are abſent by the deacons. " The rich give according to their pleaſure, and what " is collected is depoſited with the preſident for the " relief of widows, and orphans, the ſick, &c *."

This is certainly very ſimilar to the account that any perſon would now give of Chriſtians ſpending the Lord's Day. Nothing is ſaid of this buſineſs being tranſacted in the morning or evening only; ſo that we cannot but conclude that it was done in mid-day; and it muſt have taken up a conſiderable part of it.

* Τη του ηλιου λεγομενη ημερα παντων καὶα πολεις η αγρους μενοντων επι το αυτο συνελευσις γινεται, και τα απομνημονευματα των αποστολων, η τα συγγραμματα των προφητων, αναγινωσκεται μεχρις εγχωρει. Ειτα, παυσαμενου του αναγνωσκοντος, ο προεστως δια λογου την νουθεσιαν και προκλησιν της των καλων τουτων μιμησεως ποιειται. Επειτα ανιστασθαι κοινη παντες, και ευχας πεμπομεν· παυσαμενων ημων της ευχης, αρτος προσφερεται, και οινος και υδωρ· και ο προεστως ευχας ομοιως και ευχαριστιας οση δυναμις αυτω αναπεμπει, και ο λαος επευφημει, λεγων το αμην. Και η διαδοσις και η μεταληψις απο των ευχαριστηθεντων εκαστω γινεται, και τοις ου παρουσι δια διακονων πεμπεται. Apol. 1mo. Edit. Thirlby, p. 97.

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The Lord's Day had not the appellation of *a ſabbath*, nor was it *a faſt*; but it was always called *a feſtival*; and both with the Heathens and the Jews, feſtival days were no more employed in labour than faſt days, though on them they were at liberty to work if they pleaſed.

The writer of the epiſtle of Barnabas, comparing the Jewiſh religion with the Chriſtian, ſays, "The "ſabbaths which ye now keep are not acceptable to "me; but thoſe which I have made, when reſting "from all things I ſhall begin the eighth day, that "is the beginning of the other world. For which "cauſe we obſerve the eighth day with gladneſs, in "which Jeſus roſe from the dead; and having ma-"nifeſted himſelf to his diſciples, aſcended into hea-"ven *."

Tertullian, comparing the feſtivals of the Heathens with thoſe of Chriſtians, ſays, "If you would in-"dulge to pleaſure, you may; and not on one day, "but on many. With the Heathens feſtival days re-"turn once a year, but to thee every eighth day is "a feſtival †."

* Οραλε πως λεγει· ου τα νυν σαββαλα εμοι δεκλα αλλ ἁ πεποιηκα εν α καλαπαυσας τα παντα, αρχην ημερας ογδοης ποιησω, ο εςιν αλλου κοσμου αρχην. Διο και αγομεν την ημεραν την ογδοην εις ευφροσυνην, εν η και ο Ιησους ανεςη εκ νεκρων, και φανερωθεις ανεβη εις τους ουρανους. Barnabæ Epiſt. c. xvii.

† Si quid et carni indulgendum eſt, habes. Non tamen dies tantum, ſed et plures. Nam ethnicis ſemel annuus dies quiſque feſtus eſt, tibi octavus quiſque dies. De Idolatria, cap. xiv. p. 94.

Dionyſius, biſhop of Corinth, in his letter to the church of Rome, quoted by Euſebius, ſays, "This "day, being the Lord's day, we keep it holy. In it "we read your epiſtle, as alſo the firſt epiſtle of "Clemens *."

Clemens Alexandrinus ſays, that "a true Chriſ-"tian, according to the commands of Chriſt, ob-"ſerves the Lord's day, by caſting out all evil "thoughts, and entertaining all good ones, glorify-"ing the reſurrection of the Lord on that day †." The ſame writer even calls the Lord's day, though not a ſabbath, a *day of reſt*, the *chief of days*, *our reſt indeed*; intimating, at the ſame time, that the obſervance of the ſeventh day was intended to prepare the way for the obſervance of the eighth ‡."

We cannot collect with exactneſs how much time the primitive Chriſtians ſpent in public worſhip. But it ſhould ſeem that it could not be leſs, but rather more, than we uſually employ in it. According to

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† Ουτω ενιοτην την καθ' ευαγγελιον διαπραξαμενον, κυριακην εκεινην την ημεραν ποιει. ὅτ' αν αποβαλλη φαυλον νοημα, και γνωστικον προσλαβη, την εν αυτω του Κυριου αναστασιν δοξαζων. Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. p. 877. Potteri ed.

‡ Η εβδομη τοινυν ημερα αναπαυσις κηρυσσεται, αποχη κακων· ετοιμαζουσα την αρχιγονον ημεραν, την το οντι αναπαυσιν ημων· ην δε και πρωτην το οντι φως γενεσιν, εν ω τα παντα συνθεωρειται και παντα κληρονομειται. εκ ταυτης της ημερας η πρωτη σοφια και η γνωσις ημας ελλαμπει. Clem. Alex. Strom. vi. p. 810. Potteri ed.

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the excellent author of the *Enquiry into the Conſtitution of the Primitive Church*, they uſually preached an hour. The leſſons were alſo of conſiderable length. That which was the ſubject of Origen's homily on Jeremiah, reached from chap. xv. ver. 10. to xvii. ver. 5, and another was from 1 Sam. xxv. xxvi. xxvii. xxviii. part ii. p. 13.

"Their pſalms," Bingham ſays (Summary of Chriſtian Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 87), "were lengthened "to an indefinite number, between every one of "which they had liberty to meditate, and fall to their "private prayers, which Stillingfleet thought had "always a place in their ſervice. They met," he ſays, ibid. p. 88, "at three o'clock, or our nine in "the morning." It is evident from Cyprian, that they had ſervice both in the morning and the evening; in the morning in commemoration of the reſurrection, and in the evening to partake of the Lord's ſupper *.

I have not quoted any later writers, as Eubulus would not allow them to be of ſufficient authority; though when there is no trace of any difference in opinion or practice, among ſo many diſcordant ſects as Chriſtians were ſoon divided into, it may be preſumed that what we find to be the univerſal opinion, or practice, of a later period, was alſo that of a for-

* Nos autem reſurrectionem domini mane celebramus. Chriſtum offerre oportebat circa veſperam diei. Cyprian, Epiſt. lxiii. p. 156.

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the excellent author of the *Enquiry into the Conſtitution of the Primitive Church*, they uſually preached an hour. The leſſons were alſo of conſiderable length. That which was the ſubject of Origen's homily on Jeremiah, reached from chap. xv. ver. 10. to xvii. ver. 5, and another was from 1 Sam. xxv. xxvi. xxvii. xxviii. part ii. p. 13.

"Their pſalms," Bingham ſays (Summary of Chriſtian Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 87), "were lengthened "to an indefinite number, between every one of "which they had liberty to meditate, and fall to their "private prayers, which Stillingfleet thought had "always a place in their ſervice. They met," he ſays, ibid. p. 88, "at three o'clock, or our nine in "the morning." It is evident from Cyprian, that they had ſervice both in the morning and the evening; in the morning in commemoration of the reſurrection, and in the evening to partake of the Lord's ſupper *.

I have not quoted any later writers, as Eubulus would not allow them to be of ſufficient authority; though when there is no trace of any difference in opinion or practice, among ſo many diſcordant ſects as Chriſtians were ſoon divided into, it may be preſumed that what we find to be the univerſal opinion, or practice, of a later period, was alſo that of a for-

* Nos autem reſurrectionem domini mane celebramus. Chriſtum offerre oportebat circa veſperam diei. Cyprian, Epiſt. lxiii. p. 156.

mer one. I ſhall, therefore, only juſt mention what Auſtin ſays of the Lord's day. "It is, therefore," he ſays *, "called the Lord's day, becauſe in it, abſtaining from all earthly labours, and the allurements of the world, we employ it only in divine worſhip." In the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions alſo directions are given to *aſſemble continually* on the Lord's day. συνερχεσθε αδιαλειπτως. Lib. vii. cap. 30.

Beſides the public worſhip of the Lord's day, the *love feaſts* of the primitive Chriſtians were alſo held on the ſame day, and generally in the evening; as may be inferred from the famous letter of Pliny, in which he ſays "the Chriſtians meet on a certain day "to ſing hymns to Chriſt, and lay themſelves under "a ſolemn obligation not to commit any wickedneſs, &c.; then they depart, and meet again to "partake of an entertainment very innocent, and "common to all." Tertullian ſpeaks of this love feaſt as *a ſupper*, a little before night; and in the three firſt centuries, Bingham ſays it was held in the churches, vol. ii. p. 252. According to theſe accounts, the Chriſtians of the three firſt centuries muſt have ſpent a very great part of every Sunday in their churches.

What is here ſaid relates to times of peace, in which Chriſtians were at liberty to ſpend their Sundays as they pleaſed. In ſeaſons of perſecution the

* Ideo dominicus appellatur, ut in eo a terrenis operibus vel mundi illecebris abſtinentes, tantum divinis cultibus ſerviamus. Aug. Civit. Dei. l. xxii. c. xxx. Pearſon on the Creed, p. 266.

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public aſſemblies of Chriſtians would, no doubt, be much interrupted, diſcontinued, or be held by night. But there could be no occaſion to do this in any place out of Judea till the reign of Nero, becauſe Chriſtians were not perſecuted by the Romans till that time. Conſequently, their firſt cuſtoms would be fixed very early in the age of the Apoſtles; and they would be the ſame to which they would revert, when, after a ſeaſon of perſecution, peaceable times ſhould return. The latter, therefore, are an indication of the former.

All, therefore, that could be meant by the primitive Chriſtians when they ſaid that they kept no *ſabbaths*, muſt, if we judge by their practice, have been either that they did not obſerve the Jewiſh ſabbath of the ſeventh day, or that, as on other feſtival days, they did not hold themſelves abſolutely obliged to refrain from labour on Sundays; and in climates in which the weather was uncertain, they would probably work in the fields in time of harveſt. Indeed, I ſee no good reaſon why we ſhould ſcruple to do this; as work of this kind comes under the deſcription of *work of neceſſity*, as much as the lifting up an ox or an aſs that ſhould fall into a pit on the ſabbath day, which the moſt rigid of the Jews themſelves allowed. In Judea the ſeaſons and the changes of weather are regular; ſo that no inconvenience would ariſe from a conſtant reſting every ſeventh day.

That Conſtantine intended an abſolute ceſſation from all labour on the Sunday, is not probable, ſince

his order reſpected Friday *, as much as Sunday; and two days in a week would certainly have been thought too much to abſtain from labour. Beſides, it is well known, that the Chriſtians reſpected the Jewiſh ſabbath, though not in ſo high a degree as the Lord's day, and had aſſemblies in their churches on that day.

I would obſerve, however, that Eubulus is miſtaken in aſſerting, p. 85, that "with the Jews not "only all buſineſs and travelling, but all ſocial and "pleaſurable intercourſe with each other was prohi-"bited; and each family was in a manner circum-"ſcribed within its own dwelling, except during the "hours of attendance at the temple, or in the ſyna-"gogue." No ſuch precept as this is found in Moſes, and the Jews in all ages, generally made choice of the ſabbath in preference to all other days for their ſocial entertainments. "On the ſabbath," ſays Reland, "they put on their beſt cloaths, in ho-"nour of it, and uſe every expreſſion of joy, eſpe-"cially in feaſting, and indulging themſelves as well "as they can afford †."

* Διο τοις υπο Ρωμαιων αρχην πολιτευομενοις απασι σχολην αγειν ταις επωνυμοις του σωτηρος ημεραις ενουθετει· ομοιως δε και την προ του σαββαλου τιμαν. For ſuch it is acknowledged was the original reading, and not τας του σαββαλου.

† Porro in ipſo ſabbatho requiritur indutio veſtium pretioſarum, in honorem ſabbathi, et ſumma lætitia, cujus plurima ſigna edunt, epulando et indulgendo genio, quantum res unius cujuſque patitur. *Antiquitates ſacræ*, Par. IV. cap. viii. ſect. 10. p. 300.

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I am the more ſurpriſed that Eubulus ſhould imagine the Jews ſpent their ſabbaths in this recluſe and rigid manner, when it appears from Luke xiv. 1, &c. that Jeſus was invited to what may well be called *a feaſt*, at the houſe of one of the chief Phariſees, on the ſabbath day. That the company on this occaſion was large, is evident from their *chooſing out the chief rooms*, and that it conſiſted chiefly of perſons of diſtinction, is probable, from its giving our Lord occaſion to adviſe his hoſt, that, when he made a feaſt, he would not invite *his friends and rich neighbours*, &c. which ſeems to imply that he had then done ſo.

The Chriſtians of Tertullian's time were far from ſpending the Sunday in the rigid and gloomy manner in which it was obſerved by the old Puritans. "It is ſaid," ſays he, "let your works ſhine, and "now our ſhops, and gates ſhine. For you will find "more doors without lights and laurels among Hea-"thens than among Chriſtians *." And this book was written when he was a Montaniſt, the moſt rigid of all the ſects of Chriſtians.

Hilary ſays, "We on the eighth day, which is "alſo the firſt, rejoice in the feſtivity of a perfect "ſabbath †." It is evident, however, that the Sun-

* Sed luceant inquit opera veſtra. At nunc lucent tabernæ et januæ noſtræ. Plures jam invenies ethnicorum fores ſine lucernis et laureis, quam Chriſtianorum. De Idol. c. xv. p. 94.

† Nos in octava die, quæ et ipſa prima eſt, perfecti ſabbati feſtivitate lætamur. Prologus in Pſalmorum explanationem. Opera, p. 637.

day

day feſtivity of the primitive Chriſtians did not conſiſt in ſports, but in ſinging pſalms, and other expreſſions of religious joy, or in cheerful ſociety.

What were the practices of the Chriſtians in the times of the Apoſtles, may be pretty ſafely inferred from thoſe of the times that immediately ſucceeded them, ſince we have no account of any difference between them. Beſides, the Apoſtles, and all the Jewiſh Chriſtians, having been uſed to a weekly day of public worſhip, and having, no doubt, experienced the benefit of it, would naturally continue the ſame cuſtom when they became Chriſtians, and recommend the ſame to the Gentile converts. Indeed, it is moſt evident, and allowed by all, that the cuſtoms reſpecting the Jewiſh ſynagogues were kept up in Chriſtian churches, the former having been, in all reſpects, a model for the latter.

But, independently of theſe ſtrong *preſumptions*, from practices both prior and ſubſequent to thoſe of the Apoſtolic age, there appear to me to be ſufficient marks of regular aſſemblies being held by Chriſtians in the books of the New Teſtament, and alſo of thoſe aſſemblies being held on the firſt day of the week.

As this day was unqueſtionably in after times called *the Lord's day*, it may ſafely be concluded to be the ſame that was intended by the ſame term in the book of Revelation. For Chriſtians, who made ſo much uſe of the books of the New Teſtament, would never uſe words in ſenſes different from thoſe in which

which they apprehended them to be uſed there. This day, therefore, had, even in the age of the Apoſtles, acquired a peculiar appellation, and was, in the cuſtomary forms of ſpeech, diſtinguiſhed from all the other days of the week; and the probability will be that, along with the ſame *name*, the early Chriſtians received from the Apoſtles the *cuſtoms* peculiar to that day, and ſuch as have been recited from their writings.

But there is not wanting, in my opinion, the cleareſt evidence in the books of the New Teſtament themſelves, that all the Chriſtians in ſuch large cities as Corinth and Epheſus aſſembled for public worſhip at mid-day, and that theſe aſſemblies were held on the Lord's day. This is more particularly evident from the epiſtles of Paul to the Corinthians, whoſe public aſſemblies required much regulation. In them he diſtinguiſhes the church from private houſes, as was mentioned before, 1 Cor. ii. 22. He ſpeaks of the whole church coming together into one place, 1 Cor. xiv. 23, 26, and again 1 Cor. xi. 18. In theſe churches, or public aſſemblies, women were to keep ſilence, 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35, and ſtrangers were frequently preſent, ſo as often to be converted by what they heard or ſaw in them, v. 23. *If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all ſpeak with tongues, and there come in thoſe that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not ſay that ye are mad? But if all prophecy, and there come in one that believeth not,*

not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the ſecrets of his heart made manifeſt; and ſo falling down on his face, he will worſhip God, and report that God is with you of a truth. It appears alſo from the epiſtle of James that ſtrangers frequently attended the public aſſemblies of Chriſtians, chap. ii. 2. *If there come into your aſſembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in alſo a poor man, in vile raiment; and ye have reſpect to him that hath the gay clothing, and ſay unto him, ſit thou here, in a good place; and ſay to the poor, ſtand thou there, or ſit here under my footſtool, &c.*

What do theſe circumſtances give us an idea of, but of ſuch promiſcuous aſſemblies as are now held by Chriſtians in all countries, and in mid-day, to which any ſtrangers that chooſe it may reſort? What were churches in private houſes (1 Cor. xvi. 9. Col. iv. 15) but aſſemblies of Chriſtians held there, independent of the proper members of ſuch houſes? And where were epiſtles to whole churches read but in ſuch aſſemblies? as in the church of Laodicea, Col. iv. 16. That theſe aſſemblies were held frequently and regularly, appears from ſeveral circumſtances. Their being attended by ſtrangers ſufficiently implies it. For how could ſuch perſons know of private, or only occaſional aſſemblies? In Acts ii. 25, we read of Paul and Barnabas *aſſembling themſelves a whole year with the church, and teaching much people.* What could this be but attending regular aſ-

ſemblies

ſemblies of the whole church in that populous city, where the Chriſtians were numerous in a very early period?

If theſe aſſemblies were *weekly*, there can hardly be any doubt but that they were held on *the Lord's day*; and notwithſtanding what has been urged by Eubulus on this head, I cannot help thinking it very evident, that this was the caſe both at Corinth and at Troas.

With reſpect to the former, though the apoſtle ſpeaks of the money to be collected (1 Cor. xvi. 2), as laid up by individuals, on the firſt day of the week; I cannot help thinking with Mr. Locke, that it was alſo on that day to be depoſited in ſome one hand, or place; becauſe otherwiſe it would not have anſwered his purpoſe, in preventing all gatherings when he ſhould come. Could he mean to intimate that they ſhould every week, and on the firſt day of the week in particular, put into a private purſe in their own houſes whatever they intended for this charity, leſt it ſhould get mixed with their other money, and afterwards they might not be able, or willing, to ſeparate it? This, ſurely, was too trifling, and arguing an unworthy diſtruſt of their liberality. Beſides, is not the unqueſtionable fact of all ſimilar collections of money in after times being made in churches, and on the Lord's day, a ſufficient evidence that the practice began in the times of the Apoſtles? Indeed, why ſhould the Apoſtle mention *the firſt day*

of the week on this occaſion, if it was not the time of their public aſſemblies?

I have particularly conſidered all that Eubulus has advanced in ſupport of his opinion, that Paul preached at Troas on the evening before the Lord's day, and not on the evening of that day, and think it evident that his concluſion is ill-founded. It appears from Acts xx. 6, that at this time Paul ſpent ſeven days in Troas. Why then ſhould he preach to them on the firſt day of the week, if it had not been the time of their uſual aſſemblies? He had his choice of all the ſeven days; but probably, the wind not being favourable for ſailing, he did not chooſe to call the church together before their uſual time of meeting, and before that went from houſe to houſe.

Eubulus lays much ſtreſs on the Jews beginning the day on the evening. But, as Dr. Lardner ſays in his *Obſervations on Macknight's Harmony*, p. 9, (in which he ſhews that the women went to embalm the body of Jeſus on the morning of the firſt day of the week, and not on the evening of the ſeventh, though that morning, juſt before ſun riſe, is ſaid, Mat. xxviii. 1, to be *the end of the ſabbath*), "All know "very well that the Jewiſh civil day began at the "ſetting of the ſun; but that day was divided into "two parts, *night* and *day*; by day meaning the "natural day, or that part of the civil day which is "light."

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To uſe the term *day* for *day light* was as cuſtomary with the Jews as it is with us. Thus, Luke ſays, chap. xxii. 6. *As ſoon as it was day, the elders of the people, &c. led Jeſus into their council*, though, according to Eubulus, the Jewiſh day was then half expired; and all the preceding tranſactions (of the ſame day, according to him) are ſaid to be done *on the evening*, and the *night*, as if they belonged to the preceding day; juſt as we ſhould now ſpeak. So alſo Ezra is ſaid (Neh. viii. 3), to have read in the book of the law *from the morning until mid-day*, though, according to Eubulus, their *mid-day* was paſſed about the time of his beginning to read. Alſo the term *next day* is uſed in oppoſition to the evening before, though, according to him, it was a part of the ſame day, Acts iv. 2. *They put him in hold to the next day, for it was now even-tide.* And yet Eubulus refers to this paſſage as in his favour, p. 97.

I have no doubt, therefore, but that when we read, Acts xx. 7. *And upon the firſt day of the week, when the diſciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them (ready to depart on the morrow), and continued his ſpeech unto midnight*, the aſſembly began in the day-light of the Sunday, and that the *next day* was the Monday following; eſpecially as there was then no perſecution of Chriſtians, to induce them to hold their aſſemblies in the dark. I ſhall conclude with a few obſervations of a more general nature, but I ſhall not enlarge upon them.

1. If the appropriation of one day in ſeven for the

purpoſe of public worſhip was the practice of the Apoſtles, we may conclude that it was not hurtful, but uſeful. And though we Gentile Chriſtians are not bound by the Jewiſh ritual, we may ſafely infer, that if the ſabbath, as obſerved by the Jews, neceſſarily led to evil, it would not have been appointed by God for them. And from its not being hurtful to *them*, we may ſafely infer that it cannot be ſo to *us*, ſince human nature is the ſame. That this obſervance was prevented from being hurtful to the Jews by any peculiar reſtrictions with reſpect to ſocial intercourſe, I have ſhewn to be a miſapprehenſion of Eubulus.

2. In my opinion the ceſſation from labour on the Lord's day makes a pleaſing and uſeful diſtinction in our time; and, beſides its excellent religious and moral uſes, greatly contributes to the civilization of Mankind. The expectation of it relieves the labour of all the preceding ſix days; and conſequently that labour is done better with this interval than it would have been without it, to ſay nothing of the relief that it affords the labouring cattle.

3. Beſides, I cannot help thinking that in this country the manufacturers labour to exceſs; and that it would be very deſirable, would contribute to lengthen their lives, and make their lives much happier, if their labours could be moderated. The riches of this nation are procured by the premature exhauſting of the ſtrength and vital powers of the greater part of our manufacturers; though it is not

denied

denied that the intemperance of many of them contributes to the ſame effect. Like our horſes, their lives are ſhortened, and made wretched, by fatigue.

4. If the *law* did not provide intervals of reſt from labour, the labourers themſelves would not fail to do it! and the intervals of their own providing would have a worſe effect than the preſent. Our annual feaſts, in every town and village in the kingdom, are far more miſchievous than Sunday ſpent in the worſt manner. For no ideas of religion being now annexed to them, licentiouſneſs has no reſtraint.

5. If it were left to every individual to chooſe his own time for public worſhip and inſtruction (if ſuch a cuſtom could be called *public*) many would greatly abridge, and many would neglect it altogether; as we ſee to be the caſe with family worſhip, even where the obligation and uſe of it are acknowledged. The conſequence would be that ſecular concerns would engroſs their whole time, and the very appearance and profeſſion of Chriſtianity would be in danger of diſappearing among us. But on ſuch topics as theſe I forbear to enlarge, as it has been done ſufficiently by PHILANDER and SUBSIDIARIUS.

That much evil ariſes from the manner in which Sunday is now ſpent by many, both of the lower and higher ranks in the community, cannot be denied; but I hope it is not without a remedy, and I am fully perſuaded that the abolition of the obſervance of Sunday would be attended with much greater evil.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your's, &c, &c.

HERMAS.

Remarks on Mr. Evanſon's Letter on the Obſervance of the Lord's Day.

Mr. Evanson is far from denying the *expediency* or *propriety* of public worſhip, or the uſe of *public inſtruction*; ſo that he differs very materially from Mr. Wakefield. But he would not have the *Lord's day* ſet apart for theſe purpoſes, and is of opinion, that this inſtitution has no ſanction, either in the practice of the Apoſtles, or that of any Chriſtians, till the third century.

That the public aſſemblies of Chriſtians were, however, from the times of the Apoſtles, held on the Lord's day, and that a conſiderable part of this day was always devoted to the buſineſs of thoſe aſſemblies, appears to me to be ſo evident, from the authorities produced by me before, and eſpecially that of Juſtin Martyr, that I do not think it neceſſary to argue the matter at large any farther. Let our readers fairly compare what each of us have written, and then judge between us. I do not ſee why Mr. Evanſon ſhould write with ſo much apparent peeviſhneſs on this ſubject, if he did not himſelf, in ſome meaſure, feel the force of my reaſoning upon it; nor why a queſtion of this nature cannot be diſcuſſed by any Chriſtian, with the perfect calmneſs and good humour of which I ſet him an example.

It was particularly unworthy of a ſcholar and a gentleman, to obſerve, as Mr. Evanſon does, Note page 146, that in quoting a paſſage of Ignatius, which I gave at length in the margin, I omitted to tranſlate a particular clauſe in it relating to the *dignity of Chriſt*; becauſe it was unfavourable to my principles as an Unitarian, though it had nothing at all to do with the queſtion that I was then diſcuſſing. He calls my conduct in this caſe, "a prudent caution, conſidering my avowed religious principles, and that I was quoting his authority to prove what was the religion of the apoſtolic age." But what is this to the purpoſe, unleſs the queſtion between us had been concerning this particular article of religion, and on this we had no difference; Mr. Evanſon being an Unitarian as much as myſelf?

That I ſhould trouble my reader with a tranſlation of more of the paſſage than I had occaſion for, I do not ſee. That Mr. Evanſon ſhould inſinuate that there was any unfairneſs in my conduct on this occaſion, I am concerned to ſee, not on my own account, but on his. That, as a defender of Unitarianiſm, I am not afraid of any quotation from Ignatius, has ſufficiently appeared by my writings on the ſubject; and on this head, I doubt not, Mr. Evanſon himſelf is well ſatisfied.

Though I ſhall not go over the whole field of argument with Mr. Evanſon, I ſhall briefly reply to

any remark of his that has the appearance of being new.

Not being able to deny that the officers in the Chriſtian church, in the age of the Apoſtles, received ſome conſideration in temporals for their labour in ſpirituals, he ſays, p. 127, whatever that might be, "I find not the ſlighteſt reaſon to believe, that "any *reſident preacher* of the goſpel was maintained "as ſuch, at the expence of his fellow Chriſtians, "before the latter half of the third century, when "corruptions multiplied apace, and the fatal pre-"dicted apoſtacy was advancing with large and "haſty ſtrides."

Now, not to inſiſt on the caſe of Timothy, who appears to have devoted his whole time to the work of the miniſtry, and therefore to have had a juſt claim to a full maintenance; and that, for any thing that appears, there would be the ſame occaſion for other perſons doing the ſame ſervice, and receiving the ſame recompence, in other places; I would obſerve in general, that the want of writings immediately after the time of the apoſtles, makes it difficult to prove the exiſtence of any practice among Chriſtians in that period by poſitive evidence: but that an univerſal acknowledged practice (among all the diſcordant ſects into which Chriſtians were then divided) in a later period, without any hint, or viſible cauſe, of a change, is a ſtrong preſumptive evidence that the practice exiſted from the beginning. The objectors ſhould ſay,

when,

when, and *by whom*, or from what particular *cauſe* the ſuppoſed innovation aroſe. Who was it that perſuaded all the ſects of Chriſtians, who had not before been uſed to have any public inſtruction, to appoint orders of men unknown to the apoſtles, and give them ſalaries out of the fruits of their own labour, when before this time, whatever of this kind had been done, had been performed gratuitouſly. Such changes as theſe require to be accounted for in a more ſatisfactory manner, than by ſaying they aroſe from mere *ſuperſtition* or *prieſtcraft*. If theſe things did operate as *cauſes*, what were the circumſtances which favoured their operation?

I ſhall now come to Mr. Evanſon's more particular authorities, or rather to his objections to mine. He complains of my tranſlation of a paſſage in Ignatius, in which he is repreſented as recommending the obſervance of the Lord's day in preference to that of the Jewiſh Sabbath. That tranſlation I took without ſuſpicion from Archbiſhop Wake; but upon examination, I am ſatisfied that Mr. Evanſon had no reaſon to complain of it.

" No longer obſerving Sabbaths, but keeping " the Lord's-day, in which alſo our life is ſprung up by him." That the word ζωην *life*, which is omitted in the old Latin verſion, is a ſpurious reading, for ημεραν *a day*, expreſſed or underſtood, is evident from the reference to it in the following relative; viz. in *which*, i. e. " *in which day*, our life

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is ſprung up by him," which makes good ſenſe, but the phraſe, " the Lord's life, in which life our life ſprung up," is not ſo.

Mr. Evanſon ſays, p. 131, that ζωντες κατα ſignifies *living according to*, which I do not deny, and that, " if living according to the Lord's day has " any meaning, it is beyond his comprehenſion." I do not pretend to vindicate the ſtrict propriety of this Greek phraſe, nor that of many others, eſpecially thoſe that are found in authors not claſſical; but the word *day* is not the leſs neceſſary to a conſiſtent ſenſe of the paſſage. If the word *life* be the true reading, it ought at leaſt to have been followed by *in whoſe life*, not by *in which life*.

If we may be allowed to interpret the leſſer epiſtles of Ignatius by the larger, interpolated ones, this ſenſe will be much more evident. For in them the correſponding paſſage is as follows*:

" Let us no longer keep the Sabbath after the " Jewiſh manner, rejoicing in idleneſs; for he " that doth not work ſhould not eat, and the ſcrip- " ture ſaith, ' In the ſweat of thy brow ſhalt thou

* Μηκετιων Σαββατιζωμεν Ιουδαικως, και αργιας χαιροντες· ὁ μη εργαζομενος γαρ, μη ιεσθιετω; ειν ιδρωτι γαρ τυ προσωπυ συ φαγη τον αρτον συ, φασι τα λογια· σλλ' εκας υμων Σαββατιζετω πνευματικως, μελετη νομυ χαιρων, ου σωματος ανεσει, δημιυργιαν Θευ θαυμαζων, υκ εωλα εσθιων, και χλιαρα πινων, και μεμετρημενα βαδιζων, και ορχησει και κρωτοις νεν υκ ιχυσι χαιρων· και μετα τω Σαββατισαι, εορταζετω πας φιλοχριςος την κυριακην, την αναςασιμον, την βασιλιδα, την υπαδον πασων των ημερων· ην η και ηζωη ημων ανετειλε.

Id. interp. § 9, p. 56.

" eat

" eat bread,' but let each of you keep the Sabbath " ſpiritually, rejoicing in meditation on the law, " not in the reſt of the body, but admiring the " workmanſhip of God, not eating things prepared " the day before, drinking cold liquors, walking a " meaſured ſpace, and rejoicing in dancings and " noiſy ſenſeleſs diverſions; but after the Sabbath " let every lover of Chriſt make a feſtival of the " Lord's day, on which he roſe from the dead, the " queen, the greateſt of all days, in which our life " aroſe."

Mr. Evanſon ſays, p. 132, that he ſees nothing in the account that Juſtin Martyr gives of the buſineſs done in Chriſtian churches on the Lord's day, that could reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have taken up more than *an hour and an half* at the moſt. But our Sunday ſervices at preſent do not in general employ more time, in either part of the day; and Juſtin might think it ſufficient to mention what was done in one part, eſpecially that in which the Lord's ſupper was adminiſtered, as that would comprize every thing that was done in Chriſtian aſſemblies, concerning which he wiſhed to give his readers ſatisfaction.

Mr. Evanſon alſo ſays, p. 134, that contrary to my concluſion (viz. that the aſſembly deſcribed by Juſtin Martyr was held in *mid-day*), " the circum- " ſtance of the adminiſtration of the *Lord's ſupper* " clearly aſcertains the time of holding it to have " been in the evening. For," he adds, " from St. " Paul's epiſtles, Pliny's letter, and even from " the

" the paſſage you yourſelf have quoted from that " father of the Romiſh church Cyprian, it is evi- " dent, that during the three firſt centuries the " evening was the only time of celebrating the " Euchariſt, or Lord's Supper. Such a meeting " therefore, could not at all interfere with the uſual " buſineſs of the day." But Mr. Evanſon needs not to be informed that the Jewiſh *evening ſervice* was at our three in the afternoon, and that the ſervice of this time of the day is ſtill, in imitation, no doubt, of more antient times, called *the evening ſervice.*

Mr. Evanſon, p. 152, quotes Clemens Alexandrinus, as condemning the ſetting apart of any particular time for the purpoſe of public worſhip, when he ſays, " We are commanded to worſhip " God through Chriſt, not on choſen days, as ſome " others do, but continually, through our whole " life. Wherefore a well-informed Chriſtian wor- " ſhips God, not in any ſtated place, nor choſen " temple, nor on any feſtivals and appointed days, " but through his whole life, whether he chance " to be alone, or in company with other believers." But, beſides obſerving that this writer makes no mention of the *Lord's Day*, but only of *feſtivals* and *appointed days* in general, to interpret what he here ſays in conſiſtency with what he ſays elſewhere, of " all true Chriſtians obſerving the Lord's Day, and " therein glorifying the reſurrection of Chriſt on

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"that day;" he could only mean that Chriſtians do not confine their worſhip to that day.

This day was certainly never conſidered by the early Chriſtians as a *Sabbath*, or a day of neceſſary reſt from labour; but it was deemed *ſacred*, and was ſoon celebrated as *feſtival* days were; and whether the cuſtom, adopted by Chriſtians in imitation of the Heathens, of ornamenting their houſes, as a token of feſtivity on that day, was approved or diſapproved by Tertullian (on which Mr. Evanſon lays ſo much ſtreſs, p. 141), makes no difference in my argument, ſince the practice ſhews that this day was by them diſtinguiſhed from other days. He might condemn the *manner* in which it was done; but it is ſufficiently evident, from the paſſage I have quoted from this writer, that he did not diſapprove the thing itſelf. What reaſon, then, had I for quoting him, as Mr. Evanſon more than inſinuates, *unfairly* for this purpoſe?

I agree entirely with Mr. Evanſon that civil governors ought not to interfere in this buſineſs, which, as it relates to *religion*, is out of their proper province. Let no man be compelled to obſerve the Lord's day in any manner that he does not himſelf chooſe; but let every man be left at perfect liberty to work or reſt as he pleaſes; and in my opinion harveſt work ought not to be neglected on that day, in ſo uncertain a climate as ours. Were I a miniſter in a country place, where the chief dependence of my congregation ſhould be upon farming,

I would chooſe to have public worſhip early in the morning, and late in the evening, and exhort my hearers to make the moſt of the middle part of the day, in taking care of their hay and their corn. But I would not give up the idea of the *ſanctity* of that day, in ſome proper ſenſe of the word, or the appropriation of a conſiderable part of it to the purpoſes of public inſtruction and public worſhip.

If I may judge from my own experience, much more time is neceſſary to teach, and to inculcate, the principles of Chriſtianity, than Mr. Evanſon ſuppoſes. The mere *teaching* indeed, if that be confined to the elements of Chriſtianity, might, no doubt, be diſpatched, as he ſays, in an hour; but repeated impreſſions are neceſſary to form and to ſtrengthen religious habits; and the buſineſs of the world is ſuch, that if the views of Chriſtianity were not frequently preſented to the mind, we ſhould ſoon loſe ſight of them entirely, and become as worldly-minded as thoſe who never heard of Chriſtianity. Hence the neceſſity of repeated exhortation. And, as the knowledge of what directly or indirectly relates to religion may well employ a Chriſtian miniſter the whole week, ſo the communication of what he may judge to be uſeful to his hearers may well employ a conſiderable part of one day in it.

Mr. Evanſon, in anſwer to what I obſerved of the collection for the poor Jewiſh Chriſtians being made in the church of Corinth every Lord's Day,

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in order to prevent the neceſſity of any collection being made when he ſhould himſelf viſit them, ſays that παρ εατο, muſt imply that the money was kept in the benefactor's own cuſtody, and not depoſited in any common fund. This I own to be the uſual ſenſe of the Greek phraſe: but, as the purpoſe for which Paul wrote could not have been anſwered by this method, and ſuch collections, whenever they are mentioned in later times, were made on that day, I rather think, either that the Apoſtle did not expreſs himſelf accurately, or that the common is not the univerſal ſenſe of the phraſe. Yet Mr. Evanſon ſays, p. 150, "I would as ſoon miſ-ſpend my time in "attempting to prove that the ſun ſhone at noon "to a perſon who ſhould perſiſt in affirming it to "be then midnight darkneſs," as to contend with me for maintaining what I have done with reſpect to this circumſtance. Very little, however, depends upon this paſſage with regard to our main argument; and Mr. Evanſon's reaſoning would have no leſs force, if it was unmixed with ſuch contempt for that of his adverſary.

If Mr. Evanſon will take the pains to inform himſelf, he will find, that, notwithſtanding the rigorous abſtinence of the Jews from all labour, and even from lighting a fire on the Sabbath day, they always did, and ſtill do, contrive to ſpend that day as a feſtival, and that they make entertainments on it, in preference to other days. If he have not *Reland's Jewiſh Antiquities*, of which the late riots

have deprived me, ſo that I cannot have recourſe to that author at preſent; or, if he ſuſpect, as he evidently does, that I did not quote him *fairly*, let him look into *Buxtorf's Synagoga Judaica*, in which he will find a very copious account of the Jewiſh method of entertaining themſelves on the Sabbath; or, if he make enquiry of any living Jew, he will find, that my former account was perfectly correct. Cotilerius in his note on the paſſage of Ignatius quoted above ſays, *Certe in proverbium abiit Sabbatarius luxus*, i. e. "The luxury of the Sabbath became "proverbial."

As *luxury* implies *exceſs*, it is certainly not to be juſtified on any day; but ſocial and cheerful entertainments, ſuch as are not improper on other days, are by no means inconſiſtent with the acts of religion required of the Jews on the Sabbath, or of Chriſtians on the Lord's day.

THE END.

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